



Trip Report - Cape Town Pelagics - Saturday, 4 November 2023

Trip Highlights: Shy Albatross, Great Shearwater, Brown Skua, Bank Cormorant, Humpback Whales.



On Saturday morning the group met at 07:00 outside the Simon's Town Yacht Club before setting off on our pelagic tour. It was cloudy, and on our way out there was a fine drizzle, but otherwise a relatively beautiful wind-free day. Once we set off from Simon's Town harbour towards Cape Point, we soon started encountering a few coastal seabird species such as **Cape Cormorants**, **Kelp Gulls**, **African Oystercatcher**, a **Hartlaub's Gull** and **Greater Crested (Swift) Terns** and in the vicinity of the Boulders penguin colony, we came across a small raft of **African Penguins**.

Just off the Cape of Good Hope section of the Table Mountain National Park, a host of small fishing vessels were hanging out to cash in on the Snoek that have been frequenting the area for the past few days, and in turn got the attention of good numbers of the coastal birds already mentioned, as well as one or two **Sandwich Terns**.

We stopped off briefly at Cape Point for a safety check-in with the lookout tower, and then started making our way to the fishing grounds. A kilometre or two beyond Cape Point, we came across one or two **White-chinned Petrels** followed by a couple of **Sooty Shearwater**, **Cape Gannet** and **Common Terns**. Close to the fishing grounds, our skipper had brief views of a passing **Manx Shearwater**, but unfortunately nobody else saw the bird. We also had distant views of two breaching **Humpback Whales** and a couple of passing **Cory's Shearwaters**.



Cape Gannet

Even though the marine traffic website in the morning showed that one fishing vessel was present in the Cape Canyon area, unfortunately none was present by the time we got there. To make up for the lack of fish processing usually associated with trawlers and longline boats, we put out some sardines. This enticed a few **Kelp Gulls**, **White-chinned Petrels**, **Shy Albatrosses**, **Cape Gannets**, **Great Shearwater**, **Brown Skua**, **European Storm Petrel** as well as a few **Arctic Terns** and **Common Terns**.



Brown (Subantarctic) Skua

It was finally time to head northwards again after spending a few hours with the seabirds. Along our trip back towards the shoreline, we continued seeing small numbers of some of the bird species encountered earlier on during the day.

After a quick lunch stop just off Buffels Bay in the Cape of Good Hope section of the Table Mountain National Park, we made a last stop at Partridge Point where we visited the **Bank Cormorant** colony and the **Cape Fur Seal** rock, which also hosted one or two **White-breasted Cormorants** and several **Cape**. We then finally returned to the Simonstown harbour after a beautiful day of birding out at sea.

Pelagic species seen and approximate numbers:

Shy Albatross	10
White-chinned Petrel	120-150
Cory's Shearwater	2
Sooty Shearwater	10
Great Shearwater	30
Manx Shearwater	1
European Storm Petrel	2
Cape Gannet	30
Brown (Subantarctic) Skua	2

Coastal Species:

Egyptian Goose	5
Hartlaub's Gull	3
Kelp Gull	200
African Oystercatcher	2
White-breasted Cormorant	20
Bank Cormorant	20
Crowned Cormorant	1
Cape Cormorant	250
African Penguin	150
Sandwich Tern	2
Great Crested Tern	150
Common/ Arctic Tern sp.	100

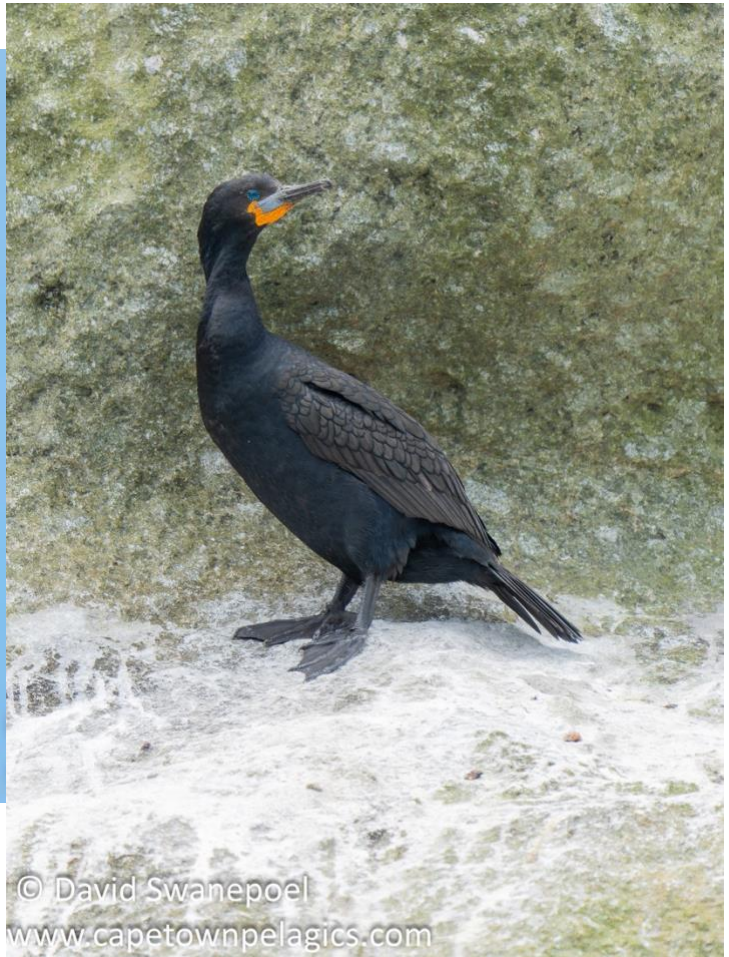
Marine Mammals:

Brown (Cape) Fur Seal	100
Humpback Whale	2

GALLERY



Common Tern



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Cape Cormorant



Shy Albatross



Great Shearwater

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A message from Cape Town Pelagics: A huge thank you to our experienced skippers who are able to safely lead us to the best birding areas and skillfully manoeuvre the boat into just the best position while all on board are busy concentrating on the birds! Coordinating a pelagic trip over a year in advance with guests from all across South Africa and different countries around the world requires an organised office team. We thank them for their special eye for detail - and for the sometimes last-minute rearrangements and frustration if the weather delays the trip to another day! Our biggest thank-you is to our Cape Town Pelagics guides who take time out of their work, often involving seabirds and conservation, and time away from their families, to provide our guests with a world-class birding experience. Cape Town Pelagics donates all its profits to seabirds, and so all the participants who join the trip make a contribution towards bird research and conservation - a big thank you from all of us.



White-chinned Petrel